HIST 651: GRADUATE READING SEMINAR
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN THE 20TH CENTURY
Fall 2023

Tuesdays 3:00 – 5:50
University Hall 319

Instructor: Cornelius L. Bynum, Ph.D.
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Office: BRNG 6168
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

This reading seminar will introduce students to representative readings on African American history in the twentieth century. It begins with African American in the Progressive Era that shaped uplift and civil rights organizations like the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and continues through the post-civil rights development of black conservatism in the 1970s especially. The course readings are not a comprehensive or exhaustive historiographical survey. Instead, this collection of studies serve to focus attention on key themes, events, individuals, and shifts that define both the period and the scholarship on African American history in the twentieth century.

Assigned Book List:


Assignments:

The assignments for this course are straightforward. Students will write three (3) synthetic essays drawing on the assigned course readings (10-12 pages ea.), lead at least one (1) class discussion, and participate fully in weekly class discussions.

The synthetic essays should address thematic and/or historiographic commonalities and contestations between the various readings. They should cogently dissect the theses, arguments, and evidence of each work and construct an effective presentation of students’ views of the issues raised in the readings. Each paper will comprise twenty percent (20%) of a student’s overall course grade.

Each student will be responsible for leading at least one (1) class discussion. Students will be expected to take 15-20 minutes at the beginning of class to briefly summarize the main text for the week, situate it historiographically, and set parameters for class discussion by outlining core themes/questions the book addresses and drawing connections to other course readings. Class leaders will also be responsible for developing a set of discussion questions on the week’s reading for jump starting the class conversation. Leading class discussion will comprise twenty percent (20%) of a student’s overall grade.

Lastly, class participation will comprise the final twenty percent (20%) of a student’s overall grade. Participation is measured by the quality of contribution to the class’ weekly discussion, not simply by frequency or volume. Finally, criticism here need not be negative; if you like a reading, explain your point of view according to scholarly criteria.
Course Requirements and Expectations:

The course requirements and expectations are simple. Weekly attendance is mandatory (this should be understood, but I state it here nonetheless). I expect active and full participation from each student each week. This means completing the reading on time, framing discussion questions for class even when not leading the class discussion, and engaging in lively, but always, respectful discussion/debate of the course readings. Your written work should be proofread before being turned in to me; if you can’t be bother to self-check your work, I can’t be bothered to grade it. Your essays should follow standard formats (12 pt. font; 1” margins; double-spaced with numbered pages).

Syllabus:

Week One

Tuesday, August 22, 2023

Course Introduction and Overview

Week Two

I. African Americans in the Progressive Era, 1890 – 1920

Tuesday, August 29, 2023

Assigned Reading:


Discussion Leader(s):

Week Three

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Assigned Reading:


**Discussion Leader(s):**

II. **African Americans in the New Negro Era, 1920s – 1930s**

**Week Four**

Tuesday, September 12, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**


**Discussion Leader(s):**

**Week Five**

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**


**Discussion Leader(s):**

**Week Six**

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**


Discussion Leader(s):

IV. Civil Rights in the Courts

**Week Seven**

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**


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Discussion Leader(s):

**Week Eight**

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Fall Break (No Classes)

**Week Nine**

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**

TBA

V. African Americans and the American Labor Movement

**Week Ten**

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**

Discussion Leader(s):

**Week Eleven**

Tuesday, October 31, 2023

Assigned Reading:


Discussion Leader(s):

VI. The Black Radical Tradition

**Week Twelve**

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Assigned Reading:


Lashawn Harris, "Marvel Cooke: Investigative Journalist, Communist and Black Radical Subject." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 6, no. 2 (2012): 91-126

Discussion Leader(s):

**Week Thirteen**

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Assigned Reading:

VII. Black Power

**Week Fourteen**

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**


**Discussion Leader(s):**

**Week Fifteen**

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**


**Discussion Leader(s):**

**Week Sixteen**

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

**Assigned Reading:**

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Discussion Leader(s):